New York & Long Island Field Offices

http://nyfo.fws.gov

Endangered Species

In New York State, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is actively engaged in carrying out provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) at two offices: the New York Field Office (NYFO), centrally located in Cortland, New York, and the Long Island Field Office (LIFO), located close to where issues arise with Long Island's four listed species, in Islip, Long Island.

Bald eagle

Current Highlights

Partnerships for Conservation of Karner Blue Butterflies

Karner blue butterfly

We work closely with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), The Nature Conservancy, and several other partners to restore habitat for the Federally- and New York State-listed endangered Karner blue butterfly. Karner blue butterflies depend on wild blue lupine for their larval food source. In addition to lupine, Karner blue butterfly habitat includes various nectar plants for the adults, native grasses for roosting, and some trees/shrubs for shade. Habitat restoration can include removal of invasive vegetation, removal of man-made structures, and planting of lupine, nectar plants, and grasses; we have assisted with these efforts by both conducting and funding the actions.

Partnerships for Conservation of Bog Turtles

We are also a partner in efforts to restore and manage habitat for the Federally-listed threatened bog turtle along with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, NYSDEC, New York Natural Heritage Program, and Environmental Defense. This involves control of invasive plant species using techniques such as bio-control of purple loosestrife, manual removal, herbicides, and controlled grazing using cows, goats, and sheep to restore open fen and wet meadow habitats.

Grazer at bog turtle site

Partnerships for Conservation of Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail

The Chittenango ovate amber snail is only known to occur at Chittenango Falls State Park in Madison County. The Service has been actively involved with recovery efforts for this species, along with multiple partners, including the NYSDEC, NY State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, local universities, and zoological institutions. The Service is part of the Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail Recovery Team, which has prepared a revised recovery plan for the snail which should be finalized in the spring of 2006. The Service has also assisted with funding research at Chittenango Falls State Park to better estimate the current population size.

Chittenango Falls

Partnerships for Conservation Indiana Bat

Indiana bat

The Indiana bat's range includes much of the eastern half of the United States from Oklahoma to Georgia, north to Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, and Vermont. In New York there are nine known hibernacula in which Indiana bats spend their winters in a state of torpor. While the Indiana bat was one of the first species listed under the ESA, we have a great deal more to learn about its biology, status, and threats to its survival. The Service is part of a large-scale effort led by the NYSDEC, in coordination with other agencies including the NY Natural Heritage Program, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Defense, Pennsylvania Game and Fish Commission, and Vermont Department of Natural Resources to investigate Indiana bat movements and habitat use within the Northeast. Indiana bats are captured as they emerge from their hibernacula in the spring and marked with radio transmitters. Biologists then follow the bats to determine how far they move from the hibernacula and what types of habitat they are using. A hibernaculum in Onondaga County will be the focus of a proposed emergence study in 2006.

Wind Power

The Service recognizes that wind-generated electrical energy is renewable, produces no emissions, and is generally environmentally clean technology and that the Secretary of the Interior strongly endorses development of wind energy. However, we are uncertain about potential impacts to our trust species including migratory birds and Federally-listed species such as the bald eagle and Indiana bat. The Service has developed interim guidelines to assist applicants with project siting, construction, and monitoring to avoid and minimize impacts to wildlife from wind power projects. More information can be found at http://www.fws.gov/r9dhcbfa/windenergy.htm.

American Eel

American eel

The Service and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration/Fisheries (NOAA/F) agreed in September 2004 to review the status of the American eel at the request of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in light of an apparent decline in the commercial eel harvest. After the status review is completed, the Service and the NOAA/F will decide whether ESA protection is warranted for the American eel. If they decide protection is warranted, either the Service or NOAA/F will publish a rule in the Federal Register proposing to place the American eel on the List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife. A public comment period and peer review will follow, with the Service and NOAA/F making a final decision based on the best available scientific information. If the decision is to protect the eel, they will publish a final rule that will explain the protections and, if applicable, exemptions. Our office is assisting with this effort.

Two "threat" workshops produced a comprehensive compilation of scientific and commercial information from multiple sources. The information included data on life history stages vulnerable to threats, geographic scope and severity of threats to various life stages, levels of uncertainties with respect to available information, and whether current information is useful to help us reach the correct

conclusion. The first workshop focused on understanding the relative importance of freshwater, estuarine, and marine habitats; vulnerabilities and resiliencies within various life stages; compensatory mechanisms inherent in this species; the role of oceanic conditions; and the characterization of, impacts from, and uncertainties surrounding barriers, turbines, harvest, and international trade. The second workshop focused on the characterization of, impacts from, and uncertainties surrounding contaminants and disease; relative importance of lake habitats, particularly Lake Ontario, to the overall fecundity of the species; integration of the ASMFC American eel Stock Assessment and Peer Review; and population dynamics of the species. The latter included discussion of the 2005 population dynamics workshop organized by the U.S. Geological Survey scientists; identification of significant threats, drivers, and the most vulnerable life stages; and lastly, individual panelists summarized risk and listed the uncertainties which will have the most implication to viability of the species.

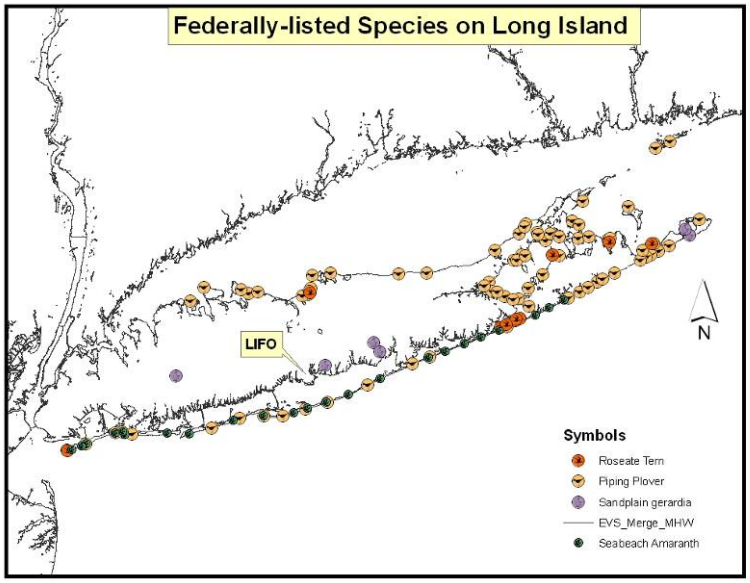
For more information, please visit http://www.fws.gov/northeast/ameel/

Piping plovers and seabeach amaranth

Piping plover

The Service's LIFO has built up an extensive network of Federal, State, and local partners who work with the Service on conservation of listed species. The LIFO provides technical assistance to public agencies and private organizations, conducts outreach, and sponsors and conducts training sessions to endangered species stewards and law enforcement personnel. The LIFO also participates in field surveys, conducts informal and formal consultations, and assists the Service's Law Enforcement Division in review of potential take issues. In addition, due to the Service's involvement in two court-ordered settlements, the LIFO conducts management and surveys at two locations on Long Island – Breezy Point and the Village of West Hampton Dunes. The Service's participation and oversight of endangered species management actions in these areas is critical to protection of the species from multiple threats including human disturbance from recreation, development, and predation.

Sandplain gerardia



Sandplain gerardia is the only plant in New York State that is on the Federal Endangered Species list. Once, 60,000 acres of native grassland provided habitat for plants such as sandplain gerardia; its pink blossoms by the millions colored the prairies in the late summer. Now, all but 200 acres of those grasslands have been lost to development or grown up in brush; by the 1980s, sandplain gerardia had almost disappeared. On Long Island, significant remnant populations remain only at Sayville, the Hempstead Plains, and Montauk. Sayville supports the largest population of sandplain gerardia on Long Island, with 85-95 percent of the total number of plants. Protection of the Sayville grasslands is critical to survival of sandplain gerardia on Long Island. The Nature Conservancy, with support from the Service, the NYSDEC, and the Federal

Aviation Administration, has been working for more than 15 years to improve sandplain gerardia habitat and increase the numbers of plants that appear each year. Keeping the area in a healthy prairie state is an ongoing process that involves doing prescribed burns by trained agency prescribed fire crews, cutting shrubs, and mowing. Each fall, mature seeds are collected by hand and resown, sometimes in totally new locations. Total numbers of sandplain gerardia on Long Island have increased from about 500 in 1990, to 14,000 in 2001, and more than 80,000 in 2003. This progress is very encouraging but most of these plants occur at just one site in Sayville. This spring, our Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program will be doing a prescribed burn on the "Hempstead Plains" site at Nassau Community College to restore habitat for sandplain gerardia and native grassland birds.

Technical Assistance and Training

Because Service biologists have unique expertise pertaining to management of endangered species, they provide technical assistance to our partners that is invaluable to address the challenge of recovering Long Island's threatened and endangered species in heavily recreationally used areas. For example: two times each year, the LIFO, with several of its partners, hosts a day-long piping plover, tern, and seabeach amaranth steward training class on Long Island. This training is primarily targeted to volunteers and seasonal plover monitors which are employed by various local government agencies on Long Island. The class provides participants an opportunity to learn the basics of plover biology and management, as well as how to monitor and protect threatened and endangered species. This year, the LIFO also conducted an enforcement training session. The LIFO also organizes an annual seabeach amaranth training workshop. Participants become familiar with this species' biology and identification, the NY Natural Heritage Program's survey methodology and reporting requirements, and management practices to help recover this species. The LIFO actively responds to management issues that involve Long Island's threatened and endangered species on a daily basis across the north and south shore of the island. Current examples include working with the National Park Service and the Fire Island Communities to protect nesting piping plovers and work with the Towns of Easthampton and Southampton, Suffolk County Department of Parks, Recreation & Conservation, and the Breezy Point Cooperative to assist them with their own piping plover nest monitoring and protection efforts.